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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000657

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL BA IR REGION

SUBJECT: IRANIAN FM ASSURES BAHRAIN OF FULL RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY

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country and no other country has sovereignty over it.

¶7. (U) In his July 15 editorial, editor of the Shia-oriented daily Al-Wasat, Mansour Al-Jamri, praised Muttaqi's statement to the press in Bahrain and urged Bahrainis to forget the past and encourage future development between the two countries. He welcomed the formation of a joint committee to develop areas of future cooperation.

¶8. (U) By June 16, the tempest created by the Shariatmadari seemed to have subsided. The story was off the front pages, except for one small article reporting that the Iranian MFA spokesman had reiterated in his weekly news conference that Shariatmadari's statement represented his personal view only and not that of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, and that Iran respects Bahraini sovereignty and will continue to have good relations with Bahrain. Also reported was a day trip Shaikh Khalid took to Saudi Arabia to brief King Abdullah on the affair.

¶8. (C) Comment: Muttaqi's visit has predictably quieted the local storm that developed over Shariatmadari's ill-timed statement. Nonetheless, the statement, in hitting a raw nerve, aroused the worst fears in Bahrain's Sunni community, especially among those inclined to distrust Iran in particular and Shia in general. The statements of the leading Shia cleric and Shia journalist are telling. Shaikh Isa Qassim wanted to make clear Shia loyalty to Bahrain, and Mansour Al-Jamry wanted to get the whole thing over with as quickly as possible. They saw no benefit in this for the Bahraini Shia. As for Bahrain's relations with Iran, the government predictably felt that, once it had made its point, it had no choice but to seek accommodation with its large and potentially threatening neighbor to the north.

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